

How to Teach Writing: Seven Steps of Writing

Dr. Methinee Wongwanich Rumpagaporn

Assistant Professor, Department of Vocational Education, Faculty of Education, Kasetsart University, Thailand

SUMMARY

This article gives an essential way to teach students to start writing through students' working group in generating ideas and thoughts in a writing class. Basic strategies to teach writing in seven steps are comprised of 1) brainstorming, 2) free writing, 3) questioning, 4) ordering and grouping, 5) content networking, 6) drafting, and 7) writing exercise. **Brainstorming** is a thinking concept of unvoiced mulling, sorting, comparing, speculating, applying, analyzing, and so on, that leads their students to new perspectives, understanding, questions, reactions about course material. **Free writing** is an individual student's activity for getting their students' ideas and thoughts from their heads and write down on to writing paper. **Questions approach** of a subject/topic that is started by thinking about a subject/ topic in terms of each question and ask questions starting with each of these question words that students want to explore. **Ordering and Grouping** is a way to show relationships between ideas and thoughts and are parts of ideas' generating and parts of thoughts' organization. **Content Networking** is similar to ordering and grouping methods in that it shows relationships between ideas and thoughts. However, content networking is most effective when examining application, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity of relationships. **Drafting** will lead students to feel "Ready to Write" their ideas and thoughts in something closer to the assignment or paper form. Importantly, the tough moments of really "Writing" begin at this point.

Introduction

Writing prepares students to make decisions simultaneously about important and connecting content and writing language. Support your students to get a head start before they write with any of these seven steps for teaching writing. (Rumpagaporn, 2015) This article shows the basic seven steps to start to write and support students to gather ideas and thoughts to fill in the bank of ideas that lead to effective writing. (Beare, 2010; Rumpagaporn, 2015; <http://busytteacher.org/>)

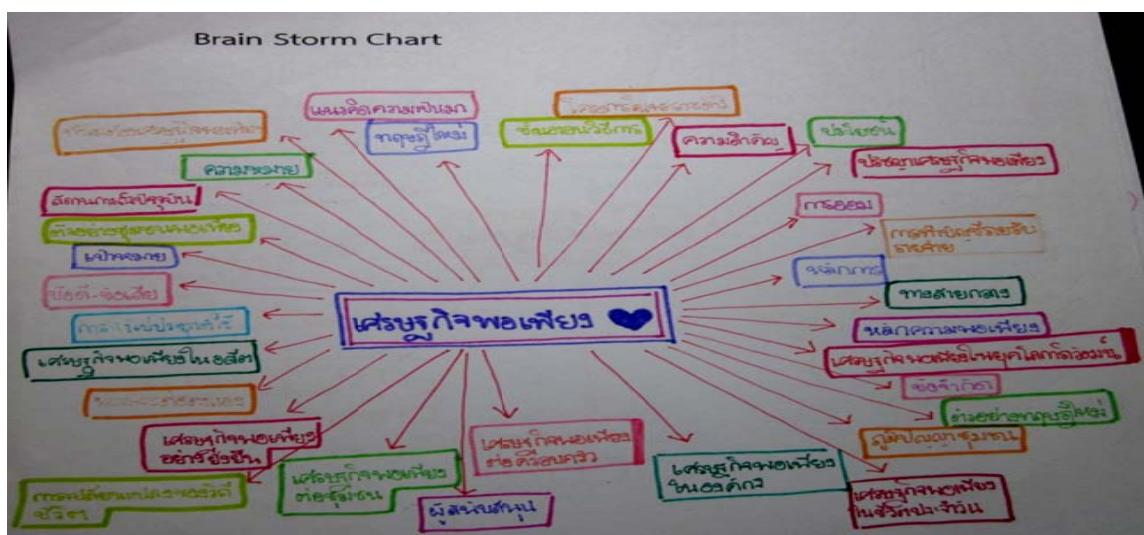
Step 1: Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an activity with which most people are familiar. The objective of brainstorming is to compile as large a list as possible of potential ideas for a given topic. This is a great activity to do in small groups (3-5 students per group) or with the entire class. **Brainstorming** is a thinking concept of unvoiced mulling, sorting, comparing, speculating, applying, analyzing, and so on, that leads their students to new perspectives, understanding, questions, reactions about course material. Naturally, one idea will spark another, so it is helpful to have students working together when brainstorming. Encourage students to be as creative as they like. Anything goes with brainstorming. Challenge your students to come up with as many writing examples as they possibly can for whatever topic you give them.

Example: Brainstorming Activity

The teacher can divide the students into a small group of 3–5 students. Members in each group analyzed the subject “Sufficiency Economy” from a variety of books, magazines, instructional medias, dialogue, pictures, slides, and so on. All the students in each group brainstormed about “Sufficiency Economy” subject that contained the meaning, principle, new theory, procedure, philosophy of Sufficiency Economy, benefits, current situations,

sufficiency community, goal, positive and negative effects in Sufficiency Economy, application in Sufficiency Economy, background and history of Sufficiency Economy, Sustainability in Sufficiency Economy, Sufficiency Economy in Globalization, Self Sufficiency economy, Sufficiency Economy in family and community, and so on. Then in each group wrote down in brainstorm mapping and separated their ideas in each group. (Rumpagaporn, 2014: 20)



This brainstorming is often furthered through class discussion and some students automatically or internally move from these initial sorting of ideas into complex, logical interpretations of course learning materials at this point. However, their students' thinking will remain an unorganized, vague set of ideas referring to the topic subject. Many will have trouble moving beyond this vague sense or simple reaction toward ideas that are more processed, complex, or what we often call "deep." We can foster these to move to a deeper understanding by providing opportunities to fix their ideas on paper so that they may both see their ideas and then begin to see the relationships among members' ideas.

Step 2: Free Writing

Free writing is an individual student activity for getting their students' ideas and thoughts from their head and write it down to paper. Students choose the topic, idea, question to consider. It can be specific detail or a broad concept of students' interests. Teacher helps students understand that although students will begin with a particular topic in mind, teachers give students a set length of time for this activity around 7-10 minutes with non-stop free writing on that topic on the page. Spelling and grammar in English writing language are not important to concern through this activity. Then,

students have completed the activity, motivate their students go back and read again what they have written.

Step 3: Questioning

Questions approach a subject/topic that is start by reviewing the question words: *who, what, where, when, why, how, and for whom*. Then, for teacher given subject/ topic “Sufficiency Economy”, think about subject/ topic in terms of each question and ask questions starting with each of these question words what do students want to explore. For example, if your topic is “Sufficiency Economy”, you might ask, “...What is the Sufficiency Economy? What types of Sufficiency Economy? Who get benefits from Sufficiency Economy? How to apply Sufficiency economy in real lives?...”. There are an infinite number of questions you can ask about any given subject/ topic. This activity can be done either individually or in groups with success. Have students write answers to each question. When finished rough drafting, have them go back and read what they have written, organize, and group their ideas and thoughts in preparation for writing.

Step 4: Ordering and Grouping

Ordering and Grouping is a great way to show relationships between ideas and thoughts. This mapping is also part of idea generation and part of organization, therefore, students will know exactly how to order and group their ideas once they are ready to write. To begin, **write your topic in the center of the page and put a circle around it.** Then students

can move in one of two directions. One example of “Sufficiency Economy” topic, Students have thinking of their questions about the topic. If the topic is “Sufficiency Economy”, Students may ask, “...What is the Sufficiency Economy? What types of Sufficiency Economy? Who get benefits from Sufficiency Economy? How to apply Sufficiency economy in real lives? ...”. **Each question should be written in a bubble connected to the central topic.** Tell students to spread these bubbles out over the page as they will be adding to each. Then, have students answered the questions connecting still smaller bubbles to the bubbles containing the questions. With students who have more knowledge about their central topic, their bubbles connected to the central idea should include subtopics and/or details about the subtopics. A student may start with Sufficiency Economy as the central theme; make a connecting bubble with the subtopic of Sufficiency Economy, then connect bubbles to that subtopic with different types of sufficiency Economy. Generally speaking, **each of the subtopics would be one paragraph in a composed piece of writing with examples and support for the idea surrounding it.**

Example: Ordering and Grouping Activity

Group student members considered in learning’s objectives and divided the subject/ topic on structuring, ordering, and grouping that come to conclude in the standard of content criteria in each group and drawn up in Concept Chart of subject contents. (Rumpagaporn, 2014: 21)



Students demonstrated the concept chart about “Sufficiency Economy” that has been displayed in details. There were comprised of 8 groups of ideas and knowledge about “Sufficiency Economy”, including, 1) Group of Concept of Sufficiency Economy, including; meaning, principle, new theory, procedure, philosophy of Sufficiency Economy 2) Group of Views on Sufficiency Economy, including; views on family sector, views on community sector, views on agriculture sector, views on academic sector, history and background in Sufficiency Economy, 3) Philosophy in Sufficiency Economy, including; the King Rama IX Initiatives, goal of Sufficiency Economy, the King Rama IX projects about Sufficiency Economy, 4) Sufficiency Economy Community, including; Meaning, Structure, Procedure, Benefits of Sufficiency Economy Community, examples of Sufficiency Economy Community, 5) New theory of Sufficiency Economy in 21st Century, including; meaning, principle, new theory, procedure, benefits in 21st Century, 6) Real Lives based on Sufficiency Economy, including, application in Finance, Education, Save World, and Save Energy, 7) Organization Role in Family Sector Role, Government Sector Role, and Private Sector

Role, 8) Globalization in Sufficiency Economy, including; Real lives, Differentiate Cultures, Sustainable Sufficiency Economy, and so on.

Step 5: Content Networking

Content Networking is similar to ordering and grouping mapping in that it shows relationships between ideas and thoughts. However, content networking is most effective when examining application, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity of relationships. With the central theme “Sufficiency Economy” in center of your page with lists of view pointing at the central idea. “...What are the difference between Sufficiency Economy and New Theory of Sufficiency Economy? What are the different types of Sufficiency Economy? Who gets benefits and losses/ limitations of Sufficiency Economy among different sectors? How to apply Sufficiency Economy in real lives?...”. When start writing, students can then focus on either linking diagram chain (topics and subtopics) or follow the writing pathway in applying an idea to a new situation, looking at ideas through problems and solution situations, and/ or developing a theory or an

argument from the relevant situations. Depending on the topic, students may create a chain of application, synthesis, evaluation, and creativity relationships and choose to write about the series.

Example: Content Networking Activity

According to previous activities, brainstorming, ordering and grouping activities, of students who were interested to write about "Sufficiency Economy". They brainstormed their ideas, discussed, and share their own experiences through a brainstorming activity. They wrote down subject/ topic in the form of brainstorm mapping and separated their ideas. Then,

group members considered the learning objectives and divided the subject/ topic on the content's structuring, ordering, and grouping that comes to conclude the standard of content criteria in each group and draws up an Ordering and Group Mapping Chart. After that, students worked together to link in the networking of subject/ topic. They wrote it down in the Content Network Mapping. Students demonstrated the content networking about "Sufficiency Economy" that has been displayed in details. (Rumpagaporn, 2014: 22)



- 1. Sufficient Economy
 - 1.1 Meaning of Sufficient Economy
 - 1.2 Principle and Benefits of Sufficient Economy
 - 1.3 History and Background of Sufficient Economy
 - 1.4 Philosophy of Sufficient Economy
- 2. Philosophy in Sufficient Economy
 - 2.1 The King Rama IX's Initiatives in Sufficient Economy
 - 2.2 Goal of Sufficient Economy
- 3. The King Rama IX Projects in Sufficient Economy
- 4. New Theory of Sufficient Economy in 21st Century
 - 3.1 Meaning of New Theory of Sufficient Economy
 - 3.2 Principles of New theory of Sufficient Economy
 - 3.3 Benefits of New theory of Sufficient Economy

3.4 Examples of New theory of Sufficiency Economy	
4. Sufficiency Economy Community	
4.1 Meaning of Sufficiency Economy Community	
4.2 Structure of Sufficiency Economy Community	
4.3 Community Talents	
4.4 Community Development	
4.5 Examples of Sufficiency Economy Community	
5. Sector Roles to Support Sufficiency Economy	
5.1 Family Sector Roles in Sufficiency Economy	
5.2 Private Sector Roles in Sufficiency Economy	
5.3 Government Sector in Sufficiency Economy	
5.4 Community Sector in Sufficiency Economy	
6. Globalization in Sufficiency Economy among 21 st Century	
6.1 Changes in Real lives and Cultures in 21 st Century	
6.2 Sustainable Sufficiency Economy in 21 st Century	
7. Real Lives based on Sufficiency Economy	
7.1 Sufficiency Economy Application in Real Lives	
7.2 Benefits and Limitations in Sufficiency Economy	

Step 6: Drafting

As students have been working with their ideas and thoughts, they have been making a series

of alternatives about their ideas that will lead them to feel “**Ready**” to put them in a more complete, coherent form; they will feel “**Ready to Write**” their ideas and thoughts in something closer to the assignment or paper form. Importantly, the tough moments of really “**Writing**” begin at this point. They may still feel that they “**Have Ideas and Thoughts**” but have trouble “getting them on the page.” Some students will suddenly be thrust into “**Writing a Paper**” mode and be both constrained and guided by their assumptions about what an assignment asks them to do, what academic writing is, and what prior experience has taught them about writing for teachers.

Before students begin writing a draft, make sure students have a thorough understanding of what the assignment requires. Students can do this by summarizing their peers’ understanding of the assignment. If students have questions about points to emphasize, the amount of evidence needed to get clarification early. Students might try writing something like, “I have summarized what I think I’m supposed to do in this paper. Am I on the right track in the way of writing?

One of the simplest, most efficient writing exercises students can do to sort through ideas and thoughts is to write a letter about what other students are planning to write in their paper. Students might start out, “My paper is going to be about....” And go on to express what evidence students have to back up their ideas, what parts still feel rough to you about your ideas. In about 20 minutes, students can easily have a good sense of what they are ready to write.

Teacher gives 5 minutes for students to give their speech to student classmates. How would

students begin the speech? What is students' main point? What key information would student include? How many details do students need to give to the listeners? What evidences will be most convincing or compelling for students' audiences?

If students have successfully used formal outlines in the past, use one to structure the students' papers. Try some of the other techniques listed here to get your ideas on the page. If students have trouble getting started on a draft, write what feels to students like the easiest part first. There's nothing magic about starting at the beginning—unless that's the easiest part for you. Write what you know for sure and a beginning will probably emerge as you write.

Sometimes it's helpful not to write the beginning or introductory paragraph first. See what you have to say in the bulk of your draft and then go back to craft a suitable beginning. Sometimes it's helpful to begin a writing session by spending 5–10 minutes writing to yourself about your feelings about the assignment. Doing so can help you set aside uncertainty and frustration and help you get motivated to write your draft.

If you are really stuck getting started or in the middle of a draft, turn the monitor off and type your ideas. Doing so will prevent you from editing and critiquing your writing as you first produce it. You may be amazed at the quantity and quality of ideas you can produce in a short time. You'll have to do some cleanup on the typos, but it may be well worth it if it allows you to bang out a draft.

You may need to test out more than one idea before you settle into a particular direction for a paper. It's actually more efficient to spend time writing in several directions i.e. trying out one idea for

awhile, then trying out another idea, than it is to try to fit all of your ideas into one less coherent draft. Your writing may take the form of brief overviews that begin, "If I were going to write about XYZ idea, I would..." until you are able to see which option suits the assignment and your needs.

Sometimes what you need most is to get all of your ideas out on paper in a single sitting. To do so, pretend you are taking an essay exam. Set a timer for an appropriate amount of time (1 hour? 3 hours?) depending on the length of your draft. Assume that it will take you approximately 1 hour per page of text you produce. Set a goal for the portion of your draft you must complete during the allotted time and don't get up from your seat until the timer goes off.

Step 7: Writing Exercise

The most important factor in writing exercises is that students need to be personally involved in order to make students' learning experiences of lasting value. Encouraging student participation in the exercise, while at the same time refining and expanding writing skills, requires a certain pragmatic approach. The teacher should be clear on what skills he/she is trying to develop. Next, the teacher needs to decide on which means (or types of writing exercise) can facilitate students' learning of the target area. Once the target skill areas and means of implementation are defined, the teacher can then proceed to focus on what topic can be employed to ensure students' participations. By pragmatically combining these objectives, the teacher can expect both enthusiasm and effective students' learning.

Choosing the target area depends on many factors; What level are the students? What is the average age of the students? Why are the students

learning English academic writing? Are there any specific future intentions for the writing (for examples, school tests or job application letters etc.). Other important questions to ask one are: What should the students be able to produce at the end of this exercise? (a well written letter, basic communication of ideas, and so on) What is the focus of the English writing exercise? (written structure, tense usage, creative writing). Once these factors are clear in the mind of the teacher, the teacher can begin to focus on how to involve the students in the activity thus promoting a positive, long-term learning experience.

Having decided on the target area, the teacher can focus on the means to achieve this type of learning. As in correction, the teacher must choose the most appropriate manner for the specified writing area. If formal business letter English is required, it is of little use to employ a free expression type of exercise. Likewise, when working on descriptive language writing skills, a formal letter is equally out of place.

With both the target area and means of production, clear in the teachers mind, the teacher can begin to consider how to involve the students by considering what type of activities are interesting to the students; Are they preparing for something specific such as a holiday or test?, Will they need any of the skills pragmatically? What has been effective in the past? A good way to approach this is by class feedback, or brainstorming sessions. By choosing a topic that involves the students the teacher is providing a context within which effective learning on the target area can be undertaken.

References

Beare, K. 2010. **Strategies for Teaching Writing.** Retrieved from [http://esl.about.com/cs/teachingtechnique/a/twri te.html](http://esl.about.com/cs/teachingtechnique/a/twrite.html)., 15 December, 2014.

Rumpagaporn, M.W. 2014. **The Development of Learning Activities based on Contemplative Education Approach to Promote Students' Systematic Analysis Thinking.** Kasetsart Educational Review. 29(2). 17–24.

Rumpagaporn, M.W. 2015. **English for Communication and Instruction.** Bangkok: Kasetsart University.

How to Teach Writing: 6 Methods for Generating Ideas. Retrieved from <http://busytteacher.org/4650-how-to-teachwriting-6-methods-for-generation.html>. 14 November, 2014.